



FAIRY TALES FROM AUSCHWITZ

W pewnym domku, pod grusząmi,
 Mieszkał sobie ród zajęczków,
 Otoczony ogrodami,
 Z mnóstwem kwiatów róż i pączków.
 Zaczę ród ten, szanowany,
 Godnie czcił tradycje domu.
 I na żadne modne zmiany,
 Nie pozwalał w nim nikomu.
 Wszystkie swoje mile działki
 Wychowywał w srogiej cnotcie,
 By żyć według wskazań matki;
 Skromnie, cicho i w prostocie.
 Lecz, tak zwykle jest na świecie,
 Gdzie pupilków jest gromadka,
 Tam się znajdzie pośród dzieci,
 Typ jakiegoś tam gagatka.

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Paweł Sawicki

Photographer:

Paweł Sawicki

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**Editorial address:**„Oś – Oświęcim, Ludzie,
Historia, Kultura”
Państwowe Muzeum
Auschwitz-Birkenau
ul. Więźniów Oświęcimia 20
32-603 Oświęcim
e-mail: os@auschwitz.org.pl

EDITORIAL

The main focus of this edition of Oś is a book of fairy tales. The book is extraordinary not for its content, but due to the fact that the stories of the “Adventures of the Black Chick,” “The Fairy Tale about the Hare, Fox, and Rooster,” “The Giant-Egoist,” and the “Wedding in Osy Wielkie” were created behind the barbed wire of Auschwitz. Risking their lives, fathers—prisoners of the camp—created them for their children. The Museum has issued a reprint of all the fairy tales. Jadwiga Kulasza writes about their history in Oś—while Andrzej Czulda, one of those the stories were created for and director of a film dedicated to the fairy tales, speaks about his personal

experience with these tales.

You can also find an article Dr. Adam Cyra has written about the complicated fate of children liberated from Auschwitz. One of those individuals was a girl who was liberated 27 January 1945, living today in Moldova and in January this year she came to commemorate the 65th anniversary of the liberation.

In addition, this edition of Oś contains an interview with theologist Norbert Reck, who was a guest during the New Year's retreat at the Center for Dialogue and Prayer. On the pages of the Center you can also find An Appeal to European Youth, created for the occasion of the 65th anniversary of

the liberation of Auschwitz. We also continue the cycle of articles on the Jewish Center's project “What do we need tolerance for?”.

Finally, we sincerely ask for support in the Igorek Bartosz's battle with cancer. Money for this will be collected during the 32 Krakow Poetry Salon at the International Youth Meeting Center. Next to the article about this event on the pages of the IYMC you will find all the information needed to financially support the medical treatment of this young boy. ■

Paweł Sawicki
Editor-in-chief
os@auschwitz.org.pl

A GALLERY OF THE 20TH CENTURY

This photograph illustrates my recollection of an Oswiecim teacher from past years, Maria Spicmillier, and next to her is a priest – Father Stanisław Domino, distinguished and popular Oswiecim school catechist from the early post-War years. He was a favorite of children and the young, always playful with a tattered wreath warmed literally by his flowing frock. (rozszybiotany wianuszek uczonego)

dosłownie jego rozszniewany sutanny.) Expressive preacher, multi-talented artist: a poet, musician, and painter. Co-author of theatrical productions on the Salesian stage of Jaselek and The Passion in their golden age, when all of Silesia came to see them. Coorganizer of Salesian summer camps for young people from Oswiecim. The author of poems for anniversaries and special occasions, religious

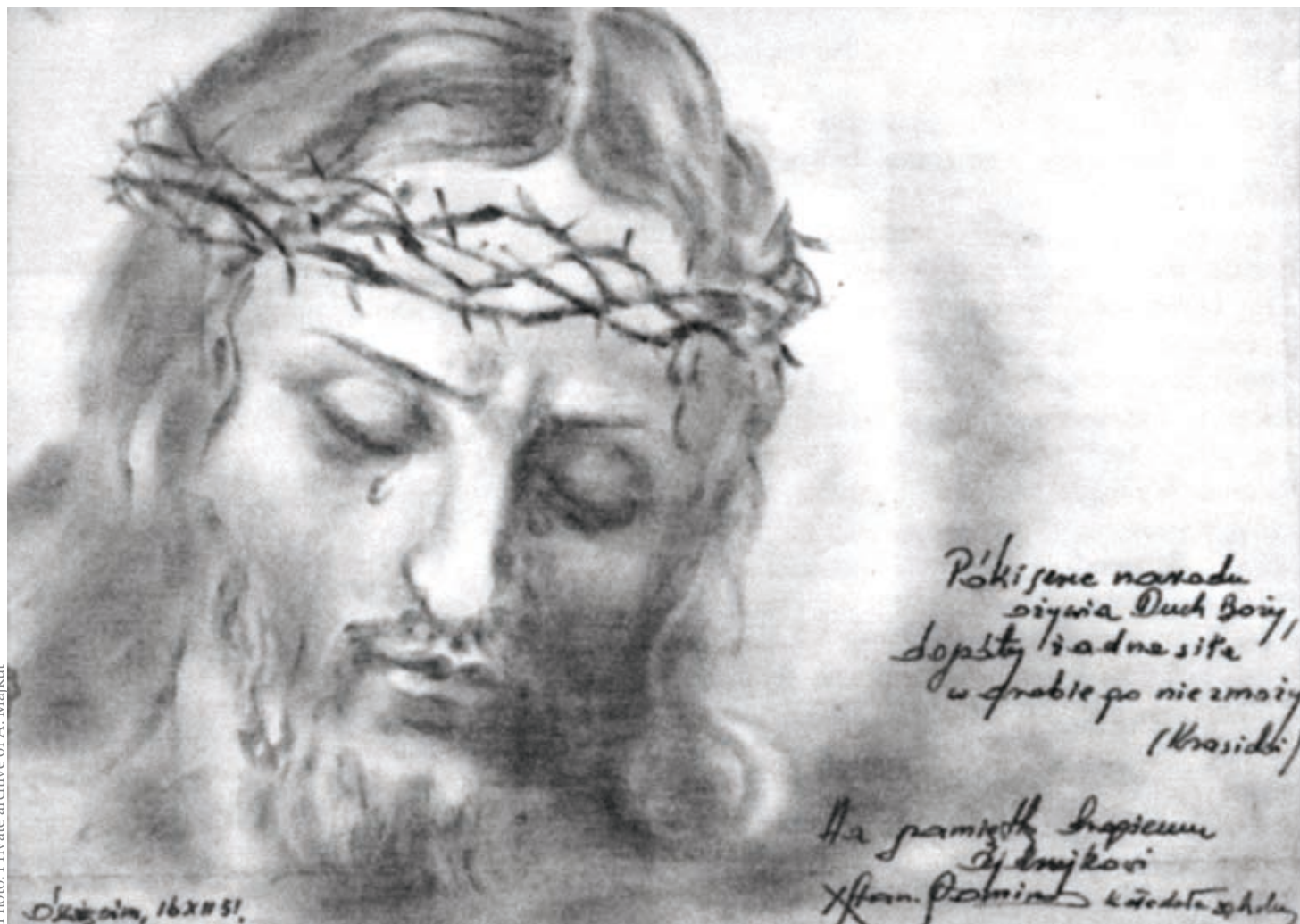
and satirical, academic and for the stage. His specialty was creating drawings of Jesus' head with the crown of thorns, done in pencil or pastel – with dramatic precision and skilled workmanship. Certainly, to this day there are people who have Father Domino's signature in their journal, illustrated with an original drawing, which could have also been a self-portrait. In some of his work, images of the concentration camps

appear, for example the silhouette of a prisoner against the backdrop of a smoking chimney of the crematorium.

Father Domino was my catechist and... the first person to review my poem at school, but that's another story.

He died in 1967. He is an important individual in the gallery of influential and, to this day, unforgettable Oswiecim residents. ■

Andrzej Winogrodzki



Head of Christ (1951), pencil drawing by Father Stanisław Domino

€6 MILLION FOR THE AUSCHWITZ-BIRKENAU FOUNDATION FROM AUSTRIA

Austria has joined the countries declaring financial support for the Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation, with a contribution of €6 million. The purpose of the Foundation, called into being last year by Professor Władysław Bartoszewski, is to set up a Perpetual Fund to generate income that will be assigned to the long-term conservation program at the Auschwitz Memorial.

"Six million euro is the sum that Austria has pledged," said Josef Proell, the deputy prime minister and finance minister, after a cabinet meeting. He pointed out that this will be exactly one-tenth of the support committed to the Foundation by Germany, a country with a population ten times that of Austria. "The details of the financing remain to be worked out," Proell said. "Working together is the only way we can create a system to ensure the long-term conservation of the remains of the Auschwitz camp," said

Museum Director Dr. Piotr M.A. Cywiński, who is also the president of the management board of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation. "We cannot deprive our children and grandchildren of the memory of this worst experience of the 20th century," he added. "They, too, will build the world of their times, and they will therefore need a full awareness and understanding of the greatest dangers to civilization." Last December, the German federal government and the federal states (Länder)

announced that they were jointly allocating €60 million to the Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation. That is half the amount needed to preserve, maintain, and conserve the authentic remains of the Nazi German Auschwitz concentration camp and extermination center. "Soon it will be a year since the establishment of the Foundation, which has succeeded in acquiring concrete financial declarations that make up over half of the planned and much-needed Fund. I am pleased that



Former Auschwitz-Birkenau camp site

Austria has joined in the effort," said Director Cywiński. The purpose of the Foundation is to raise €120 million for a Perpetual Fund yielding annual interest on the order of €4 to €5 million. This will make it possible to plan and systematically undertake essential conservation tasks. By

the same token, and for the first time in its history, the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial will have a real chance to carry out a stable, long-term conservation program allowing it to preserve the remains of the camp for future generations. ■

Paweł Sawicki

THE AUSCHWITZ MUSEUM IS IMPORTANT FOR THE DISTRICT

The possibilities of cooperation and opportunities associated with the existence of the Auschwitz Memorial Site, a museum known worldwide, were discussed at a meeting at the Museum by members of the Committee for Economic Development and Promotion of the Oświęcim District.



Development Committee meeting

"The work of the State Museum is one of the important and strategic activities linked to the district" noted Councilman Leszek Szuster. "The ability to learn about the work, along with the plans of the Museum seems to be invaluable. Meeting the man-

agement made it clear to all of us what an important institution it is in the context of the district's development," he added. Last year the budget of the Museum was over 30 million PLN. This is money that almost in its entirety was spent

in the Oświęcim District. "Rational planning of development by the local government cannot disregard the Memorial Site, not only because of the number of visitors, but also for economic reasons," emphasized Museum Director Dr. Piotr M.A. Cywiński. "There is a great chance to integrate many efforts, and for this to take place there must be the feeling of cooperation. I am pleased that at the district level this is very positive," said Director Cywiński. During the discussion with the Museum management, the members of the Development Committee were most interested in the investment

perspectives of the Museum, such as, the development of a modern visitor center at the current PKSiS site and adaptation of the, so-called, Old Theater, which will be the headquarters of the International Center for Education about Auschwitz and the Holocaust. "I believe that such meetings are very much needed and this is not only my opinion, but of all members of this committee. We are, however, impressed with what we have learned," said Stanisław Zajac, Chairman of the Economic Development and County Promotion. "The Auschwitz Museum is a springboard and

the possibility of development of our county through tourism and all the related facilities associated with this. "I learned many interesting things here. Personally, I am very impressed by the activities and development of the State Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau in Oświęcim. The possibilities are great and I am surprised that cooperation between the city and Museum is not taking place as it should. I am certain that chances for development are enormous. Waldemar Klisiak said summing up the meeting of the committee. ■

Bartosz Bartyzel

A FOUR-YEAR-OLD GIRL FROM AUSCHWITZ-BIRKENAU

Among the prisoners liberated from Auschwitz on 27 January 1945, there were around 500 children of various nationalities who were under 15 years of age. One of them was a four-year-old girl, who only remembered that her first name is Shura.

The liberation of Auschwitz Along with other camp prisoners, she walked out of a camp barrack when Soviet soldiers arrived at Auschwitz II-Birkenau. When one of them saw her, he took out

a sugar cube from a metal box and gave it to her to lick. He carried her out of the camp on his arms and put her into the army field hospital. Together with the unit, she moved deep into Ger-

many as a "child of the regiment". A nurse from the field hospital cared for her. She remembers how the soldiers from the regiment celebrated the victory in May of 1945. That's when they gave Szura



Aleksandra Garbuzova, Eva Mozes Kor with Polish President Lech Kaczyński and Aleksandra's grandson Andrzej

the name Pabieda (victory), because she didn't know her real name.

Foster Parents

The regiment was stationed in the town of Bielce in Moldova after the war, and then they were moved to Romania. Shura, who had been cared for by the soldiers of this regiment could not travel to Romania. It was decided that she would be given up to a local orphanage under the name Aleksandra Mihaylovna Pabieda. Her first name she took from her 'father', the leader of the regiment, who she always accompanied. His name was Mihail Chozin. She was put into the previously mentioned orphanage at some point between 1945 / 1946. She was there for half a year. Soon she was taken to be raised by Tatiana and Siemion Jaroslavski, who became her foster parents. They raised

her as their own child and encouraged her to study at the Commercial Institute in Chisinau. The entire time it never occurred to her that she was a former prisoner of Auschwitz II-Birkenau and she was unaware as to why she had the number 77325 tattooed on her left arm.

Rediscovering her mother and sister

While studying in Chisinau, her roommate brought her the newspaper "Literaturnaya Rossiya" in which there was an advertisement that a mother, former prisoner of Auschwitz II-Birkenau, tattooed with the camp number 77324, is searching for her daughter whose name is Shura. Together, but in reality separately, they were in the same camp from which her mother was evacuated to Ravensbrück from where she was liberated in the spring of 1945. This is how Aleksandra (Shura) found out that her

biological mother is alive and lives in Belarus. Soon she also received information that her older sister Lyudmila, who had been imprisoned in the children's camp in Łódź, had also survived the war. The two lived in Vitebsk. It was 1968 and Aleksandra was twenty-seven years old.

Aleksandra and her biological mother and sister had an emotional meeting. From her mother, Anastasia Ivanovna Koroliyova, she found out that her father Makar was killed in 1943 as a partisan in Belarus. The Germans had previously burned the Barkov village near Vitebsk, and her mother together with three daughters were taken to a prison in Vitebsk, from which they were transferred to Majdanek. Her oldest sister Lyudmila was held in the previously mentioned children's camp in Łódź and her middle sister Rima died in Majdanek. On 14 April 1944, 1,239 pris-

oners were transported from Majdanek to Auschwitz II-Birkenau. Among them were Aleksandra together with her mother. They received camp numbers 77324 and 77325.

From their first meeting in 1968, Aleksandra has kept contact with her biological mother and sister, but she still remained in Bielce in Moldova with her foster family. Her mother Anastasia Ivanovna Koroliyova died in Vitebsk in 1995. Earlier, in the late 1980s her foster parents also died.

Twice visited the Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau

Aleksandra Garbuzova visited the Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum for the first time in 1990. Her second visit was this year for the 65th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau and she brought her grandson, Andrzej Dmitrenko, who speaks very good Polish. She is the only former pris-

oner of this camp that lives in Moldova. This country only achieved independence in 1991.

It is worth mentioning that around 20 thousand Poles are spread around the entire territory of Moldova. Many of them live in Aleksandra Garbuzova's hometown of Bielce, and this is why her grandson Andrzej's knowledge of Polish is so good, his father is a Pole.

During the anniversary commemorations at the former Birkenau camp in Brzezinka, where the first part of the ceremony took place in a specially prepared tent, he met President Lech Kaczyński and told him about Moldova's Polish Diaspora as well as had pictures taken with him and his grandmother, which he plans on giving to the Polish House in Bielce when he returns to Moldova. ■

Dr. Adam Cyra



Barrack B-80

AS NOT TO FORGET...

Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum faces challenges. The most important is to cultivate the remembrance of the victims, which is helped by, among others, exhibitions, but also the memoirs and testimonies that are in the archives. The Museum also has archival documents, very moving personal effects of those murdered, as well as works of art. This also includes (perhaps above all) the preservation of authentic buildings, which are shocking evidence of the existence of this death camp. Their conservation is among the most difficult tasks.

So that the, over one million annual, visitors have the longest possible chance to experience the original site of the former camp, various work is being done. The European Operational Program "Infrastructure and Environment" is financing two projects. One of these has started—the building and conservation work of five wooden barracks on the site of the former concentration camp

Auschwitz II-Birkenau. That is, three wooden barracks in sector BIIa (men's quarantine), one in sector BIIb (the Theresien-Stadt Jewish family camp), and one of the hospital barracks in sector BIa (women's camp). The first to be put through conservation are the hospital barrack and a barrack from the quarantine, which housed the prisoners' latrines. In the museum inventory they are listed as B-80 and B-171.

Barrack B-80 was brought to Birkenau from Auschwitz in October 1942 because of an epidemic that broke out in the women's sector. It received the number 28 and was part of the camp hospital compound (with barracks numbered 22, 23, 24, 29, and 30). In its interior there was a reception room—a large hall and two or three small rooms. In the large room there was a table, in the corner a cabinet with medication and doctors implements as well as a couch. On the left side there was an SS man's desk and the floor was made of packed clay. The windows probably had shutters, as evidenced by the preserved remains of hinges on external walls of the barrack.

Inside, various types of paintings have survived to this day and this is the only such structure on the site of the former Birkenau camp. On its walls are unique decorations made with templates in the form of bottles and glasses as well as triangles forming rhomboids. In some places there are horizontal stripes. Most of the decorations have survived in a bad condition; the paint is flaking and crumbling. Some of the damage is due to vandalism. Experts believe that the state of this barrack was bad before conservation work was started. The main reason for the damage to the wooden elements was due to atmospheric and biological conditions. A great deal depended on the aging process of the wood, as well as the last conservation when the building was not properly reassembled. Photogrammetric documentation of the polychrome has been already completed, and in September 2009 the preservation works began on the polychrome as well as on wooden and metal elements of the barrack. The roof pallet was taken apart and the elements destroyed due to

corrosion and moisture were repaired. Also taken apart were the tarpaper from the roof, roof panels, exterior wall panels, interior partition walls and windows, doors and barracks wooden structure. All these elements were taken to the preservation workshop. The main problem those doing the conservation work faced was choosing the proper paint for fire protection, disinfection, and strengthening the wood's structure.

The next barrack put through conservation work has been barrack B-171, which during the time of the camp's operation was used as a sanitary barrack. It was marked with the number 16b and was found in the area around camp sector BIIa—the men's quarantine camp in Birkenau. It was built in the summer of 1943. It is a horse stable-style barrack. The German Army used the same barracks. They were built of ready made, prefabricated elements, specifically marked for easy assembly. The barrack was placed on wooden beams. In

one of its parts were the latrines and in the other washrooms, which have not remained intact. Latrines in the form of concrete troughs covered with reinforced concrete slab with holes were placed in each of the aisles. In this part of the barrack, the floor was concrete.

Here, too, preservation measures have been taken similar to those used in barrack B-80. The structure was disassembled and taken to the preservation workshop, where work has begun on the walls and roof sections. The wooden elements of the barrack's construction were damaged and had to be reinforced or replaced. It was also necessary to do conservation work on the layers of paint. Work has also started on the roof skylights.

The preservation work on the next two barracks in sector BIIa should begin in June 2010, and the barrack in sector BIIb in July of 2011. ■

Iga Bunalska



Barrack B-171



SALON FOR IGOREK

The 32nd Krakow Poetry Salon at the IYMC, which took place 7 February, had a special meaning. That evening, lovers of spoken poetry waited impatiently, because it was to be read by a special voice, in the opinion of many—the most beautiful—of the great actor Krzysztof Kolberger. There was another reason. During the meeting, there was also the public donation drive for Igor Bartosz's therapy. These two occasions meant there was a record audience at the IYMC.

From the beginning, it turned out that the 32nd Salon would be missing one great individual. Due to health reasons, Krzysztof Kolberger could not make it to Oświęcim and organizers were only made aware of this fact the previous day. During this difficult situation, a true friend and great actor—Mr. August Kowalczyk—89-year-old former prisoner of Auschwitz came from Warsaw without hesitation to perform in Oświęcim. The Salon's audience greeted him with

For all those who would like to take part in work to help, we provide a link to the blog that is run by Igor's parents: www.igorbartosz.blogspot.com.

By offering 1% of one's taxes, Igor can also be helped. To do this, one must fill in the blanks on the Polish tax document PIT in the following manner:

Nazwa organizacji:

Fundacja Dzieciom „Zdążyć z Pomocą”

Numer KRS: 0000037904

It is essential to write “Igor Bartosz”

Information for giving official donations:

Fundacja Dzieciom „Zdążyć z Pomocą”

ul. Łomianańska 5

01-685 Warszawa

Account Number: 4112401037111001013219362

It is essential to write: Darowizna na rzecz Igora Bartosza

Photo: Bartłomiej Senkowski



“Maciej Krzysztof Dąbrowski, or—as is often his signature—«m k d», creates art primarily for those who need an everyday contact with art. Art, we add, which contradicts, is a gift, offers casual passers-by its creator's enjoyment, does not actually expect anything in return. It doesn't even expect those who are presented it to remember the artist's name. It is difficult to have more hon-

orable intentions that those that direct the artist!” The honor of «m k d» does not only depend on what he offers his audience, what his fans can buy, just the opposite. Often in his poems and journalistic work he is able to show his sharp claws, to painfully hit with satirical baton, and firmly shake more than one presumptuous person. Paradoxically—for this it is impossible



warm applause.

August Kowalczyk moved the audience not only because of his noble behavior. His powerful—and yet unrehearsed interpretation had a special resonance when the actor read a piece about a child, as if it was an undeclared dedication to Igor Bartosz.

The author of the poem, which many of the Salon audience had the opportunity to experience for the first time, is by a contemporary Warsaw poet, Maciej Krzysztof Dąbrowski. He also showed himself to the audience in Oświęcim as a talented pianist.

Photo: Bartłomiej Senkowski

A few emotional words about Igor (and perhaps about ourselves...) instead of a postscript.

We support Igor's parents, now more than ever, as his PARENTS. Igor, himself, is already ours—little one from Oświęcim whose smiling face is in the minds of all who live in town (and not only!). Igor's victory will be our victory, because Igor isn't only a suffering child, little boy who courageously deals with complicated and painful therapy. He has become a symbol of that which is beautiful and honorable in us. He is the symbol of a kind of incredible solidarity, giving, and faith. But that is not all—it has been this boy who has, more than any idea, promise, or threat that has awakened us to mass action. We no longer only feel compassion, but we have personally learned that we can do a great deal: socially, creatively, and most importantly—succeed! We provide financial help, but we are also emotionally strong, and importantly—a giant support group for Igor as well as his parents.

Monika and Albert write in the blog dedicated to their son's illness, that for them our—from Oświęcim (and, I repeat, not only)—help is so wonderful, that it is unbelievable. But also for us?

We support the parents of Igor, now as Igor's PARENTS. But they have been with us from the beginning. Monika and Albert, known to many personally, have always been helpful and open people. For many others, Monika and Albert, previously active and honest journalists for the press, radio and television, are today people who through their everyday work, care for the city and its inhabitants.

But that is not all: Monika and Albert, who have been with us and for us, worked in their time away from work on various charitable actions, the most spectacular—a concert for the benefit of little Patryk which took place last year. The drama that has befallen their own child, motivated us further than many other, similar tragedies, because it has touched someone close.

We help and believe that Igor will win. That together we will win this war. And in good will: we believe and help. Because when Igor finally wins, there will still be many other fights for little ones' lives—and we, the citizens of Oświęcim—will know that we are ready for them, in faith and help—TO WIN! ■

Photo: Bartłomiej Senkowski





We are very excited that, as it happened, he is performing at the Salon for the first time and, we hope, not the last," say Jadwiga and Janusz Toczek.

During the evening, the Rotary Club of Oświęcim also held a public donation drive for treating Igorek Bartosz. Thanks to the good will of the IYMC guests, over four thousand zloty was collected. The coordinated action of the Rotary Club and the Center is one of the many activities that carry the logo of the "Small Orchestra of Great Charity." Under this name, is a group of people who spontaneously started a wide range of activities, mainly artistic in nature, which collects money to help the boy with his illness. ■

Joanna Kłęczar

not to like him," wrote the hosts of the Salon, Jadwiga and Janusz Toczek in the meeting's program. The third artist that performed during the Salon was Mar-

cin Domarzewski, a known Oświęcim vocalist.

"This is one of those Oświęcim residents that we want to share with the world. His day job is as a

music teacher, but his students claim that he is someone who is more than just a teacher... He does music-therapy, but those under his care become infected

with his true passion. He is a fantastic singer and experiments with various forms of music. He is also an original composer of music and lyrics...

ABOUT THE BANALITY OF GOOD

CIVILIAN RESISTANCE AND CIVILIAN COURAGE. OCTOBER 1943. RESCUING DANISH JEWS FROM MASS MURDER—A WORKSHOP

The actions of saving people, as a form of civilian resistance, were almost completely ignored until the beginning of the 1990s. Stories of those who hid the persecuted, provided them with care or assisted in their escape, were often dismissed and what was emphasized was the failure to act by the majority. Since the release of Steven Spielberg's "Schindler's List" the forgotten heroes, those who either were late or were never honored for their actions, are increasingly present in the historiography and public debate. The stories of the "quiet heroes who saved lives" draws our attention to life and the will to survive of other people, which shows us that during the time of National Socialism there was a chance to be in solidarity with those excluded from society, and that sometimes that solidarity evolved into real action (from Verena Haug, "Rettergeschichten aus pädagogischer Perspektive – ein Diskussionsbeitrag")

In the framework of workshops presenting the Jewish social history in Denmark, and the principles of National Socialism, German occupation policies and strategies of Danish policy, the Danish resistance movement and actions, designed to rescue Danish Jews from the Holocaust in October 1943. The introduction deals with the German system of occupation in the northern, western, and southern part of Europe based on the studies of Raul Hilberg. In addition, in smaller groups, text and photographs are being prepared from the exhibition "Oktober 1943. Die dänischen Juden – Rettung vor der Vernichtung" (Published by: Königlich Dänisches Ministerium des Äußeren und das Museum des Dänischen Widerstands 1940-1945).

After an interactive tour of the exhibition made by the various sub-groups a discussion is held about the historical events and the present, and the following issues are raised: What factors are prerequisites for action? What values give people courage to decide to save others? What incentives motivate them to respond with courage when threatened with the loss of life? Are they heroes or ordinary men and women? What is the proper moral courage and civilian resistance? Optionally, the documentary film is also proposed "Die Schindlers—Retter mit Diplomatenpass" by Dietmar Schulz (ZDF-History, 2007).

The workshops are part of the project "Remembrance about Auschwitz—Human Rights in Today's World"

and financed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of German. ■

Ela Pasternak



REMEMBRANCE ABOUT AUSCHWITZ —HUMAN RIGHTS IN TODAY'S WORLD

In 2010, the Educational Department of the International Youth Meeting Center in Oświęcim will hold workshops for study groups in the framework of the project "Remembrance about Auschwitz – Human Rights in Today's World".

Human rights and National Socialist propaganda violating human rights then and now.

Workshops for young people on study visits to the IYMC in Oświęcim.

Ewa Guziak

Example of civilian courage: Irena Sendler rescuing Jewish children from the Warsaw Ghetto.

Workshops for young people on study visits to the IYMC in Oświęcim.

Anna Meier

Genocide in the past and currently: Auschwitz, Rwanda. Examples of resistance movements and civilian courage.

Workshops for young people on study visits to the IYMC in Oświęcim.

Teresa Miłoni-Czepiec

About the banality of good. Civilian resistance and civilian courage. October 1943. Rescuing Danish Jews.

Workshops for young people on study visits to the IYMC in Oświęcim.

Elżbieta Pasternak

FAIRY TALES FROM AUSCHWITZ



A new publication has been released by the Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum entitled "Bajki z Auschwitz" [Fairy Tales from Auschwitz]—a collection that consists of six reprints of fairy tales created during World War II within the Nazi German Concentration Camp Auschwitz.

"This is an extraordinary publication. Previously, for obvious reasons, we have released publications aimed at adult readers—historical research, memoirs, source material, and so on," says Jadwiga Pinderska-Lech, head of the Museum Publication Department. "For the first time we have published a book that can also find a place on the bookshelf in a child's room. Keeping in mind younger

readers, the preface is written in such a way that is easily understandable for children, she emphasized. For this occasion, the International Center for Education about Auschwitz and the Holocaust has organized educational sessions for teachers and students from schools in Oświęcim, whose main guest was Andrzej Czulda director of the film "Fairy Tales from the Land of Ovens" and the

son of one of the former prisoners who participated in the creation of fairy tales. This book is available on the online Museum bookshop and at the Auschwitz Memorial Site and all proceeds are destined for the conservation of the objects connected with the extermination of children in Auschwitz and the so-called children's barrack at the Birkenau site. ■

AJ

IT HAPPENED IN THE AUSCHWITZ CONCENTRATION CAMP

Auschwitz prisoners struggled in various ways with the reality of the camp and fought not only for their lives, but also to preserve human dignity. Art, its creation as well as taking part in various cultural activities, was one of the more important methods that saved prisoners from falling to the level of the mindless and enslaved number. Thanks to this, they could break away from the nightmarish reality and forget about their imprisonment.

The Krakow graphic artist and painter Franciszek Jaźwiecki, assessing the work he created in the camp, said that doing drawings took him away to another world, his own world of art and he paid no attention to danger because "so attractive and absorbing it was to be and create in his own world."

It was with this heartfelt need that the publication of fairy tales at Auschwitz was possible.

It all began from the fact that one day one of the prisoners working in the *Zentralbauleitung* (Central Construction Department), found colorful children's books, most probably near the "Canada" warehouses where belongings of those murdered in the camp were stored. He brought them to the *Baubüro* (Construction Office) to show his colleagues. Awareness of the fact that they belonged to children who were murdered in the gas chambers deeply moved the men. They brought about memories of children that they had to leave behind at home, ones that prisoners often never even got to know, about the games they played and the walks they took with them. They decided then to write a fairy tale for their own children.

A large group of prisoners was focused around this idea, those mainly employed—almost exclusively—in the

different *Zentralbauleitung* offices. The reason for this was that, above all, they had the technical conditions for doing such work. That is, they had relatively easy access to writing materials, paint, tracing paper, paper (light-sensitive and photographic), and machines for making copies. In a secret message smuggled out of the camp Henryk Czulda wrote on 7 July 1944: "Tell him (son Zbyszek – J.K.), that daddy would paint many pictures for him, but sending them would be difficult."

Important to the work in creating the fairy tales was the personal talent of the prisoners, as well as the lack of rigorous supervision by the SS. Being careful while using office supplies in ways that they were not intended for, which could be considered sabotage and could lead to severe consequences, it was possible to do work that was not connected to the prisoners' everyday work.

Despite these favorable circumstances, it is very difficult to comprehend how in the camp, in conditions of hunger, humiliation, limitless suffering, in a place with nothing in common with beauty and esthetics any sort of art could have come to be, especially the systematic writing and publishing the fairy tales. This work, of course, required quiet and calm, the right mood and

steady hand, which during the constant threat of an SS man suddenly entering the office was not at all easy. This is confirmed by H. Czulda: "...your dad had to paint these pictures stealthily, hiding, like a thief because if the Germans would have caught daddy, he would have been severely punished. That's why you have to forgive me

my son, that my pictures are so clumsy, because they were created in haste, nervously and under constant fear that somebody would see this, often put away while working on them and again taken out once danger has passed..."

However, the longing for their children and desire to leave something of

themselves behind was so strong that nothing could stand in the way of finishing the project. The author and translator of most of the texts is Stanisław Beć, whom colleagues from the *Zentralbauleitung* called "our man of letters". In translating one of the fairy tales from Czech he was helped by Wilhelm Kapal (Kappel),



Photo: Collections Department, ABSM



Photo: Collections Department, ABSM

a Czech man who worked in the *Baubüro*. Drawing and coloring the pictures in all copies were done by: Marian Moniczewski, Mieczysław Kościelniak, Piotr Kopańczuk, Henryk Czulda, Alfred Przybylski, Jacek Kopczyński, Albert Stępkowski, Zbigniew Kowalczyk, Jerzy Brandhuber, Leszek Kozak, Jerzy Baran, and Borkowski (first name unknown).

Prisoners who had access to the necessary materials and copy machines did the technical side of publishing the fairy tales. This work was done by: Eugeniusz Nosal, Andrzej Czarnecki, Józef Drożdż, Zbigniew Goszczyński, Fryderyk Junger, Zbigniew Kowalczyk, Zygmunt Kwiatkowski and Borkowski (first name unknown). According to Eugeniusz Nosal, Stefan Świszczowski, Leopold Moszyński, Władysław Siwek and Leon Sawka also worked in the publishing group.

It is assumed that the first title published was "The Adventures of the Black Chick," of which one has the title "Black Boy and Little Monk," taking its name from the two main characters—chicks. The author of the texts, Stanisław Bęć, writes about walks he took with his son Andrzej on the banks of the Pilica River. He described them through the eyes of the two chicks Black Boy and Little Monk, who decided to see more than just their own courtyard. Black Boy, curious about the wider world, convinced Little Monk to take a trip around the local area. Depending on the copy, the fairy tale contains two or three songs. For two of them, the lyrics (about daisies and waves, as well as a huge mill wheel) were written by Stanisław Bęć and for the third (about bees) by Artur Krzetuski, who composed music for

each of the songs.

Each copy of the "The Adventures of the Black Chick" contains a dedication, which emphasizes the intimate and personal connection to the person that the fairy tale was given. Two of them have this in poetry form.

The next title published was "The Fairy Tale about the Hare, Fox, and Rooster," which was translated from Czech by Stanisław Bęć with the help of Czech prisoners. The plot of the story is about the problems of the hare with a devious fox, which has dishonestly taken his house. All were afraid of him—dogs, the bear, and bull—but the cunningness of the rooster meant that, to save himself, the fox has to run away. The adventures of the hare and the consequences of the unethical behavior of the fox are described in one short and blunt sentence: "That's what usually happens to scoundrels, when they swindle someone." Prisoners interpreted this as a form of freedom and deserved punishment for their tormentors.

Stanisław Bęć has said that the pictures were copied from the Czech originals, except for the one found on the cover showing the main characters of the fairy tale. Alfred Przybylski personally created this drawing. Three copies of this fairy tale contain dedications.

Stanisław Bęć is the author of the rhyming dedications. They were addressed to Alojza Kotulek and Małgorzata Lewińska as well as Maria Sitko and her son Tadeusz. The dedication to Maria Sitko had a deeper meaning because of Józef Drożdż's words:

"Through the mountains, forests, rivers...

*This fairy tale has gone astray
So that it would give joy to Maria*

It will not be easy

To understand the fairy tale entirely—

However, from it, our wildcat Tadeusz will learn

How our hare, Klapouszek, has left. Józef. Grodziec."

With these words he in-



Photo: Collections Department, ABSM

formed his sister about a planned escape from the camp, which in fact took place 30 September 1944. Józef Drożdż fled together with Roman Taul, helped by a civilian worker Józef Łyszczarz.

Dedication to Felicjan Świerczyna was written by his father Bernard, who as a high-school student

had written and published quite a lot for periodicals published in Silesia before the Second World War. It can be thought of as a last will written for his son, because he was hanged in the camp 30 December 1944. Felicjan has said that those words played an important role in his upbringing. The fairy tale is a very personal memento left by the father he never met, because his father was already arrested and in Auschwitz when he was born. Bernard, due to the help of many wonderful people had the opportunity to see his son from a distance as he traveled with camp undergarments to the laundry facility in Bielsko. Felicjan does not remember the trips he took accompanied by his mother. A more powerful experience is a meeting that took place in 1944 in Myslowice, but he is not certain if this is a personal memory or simply something that his loved ones have reminisced



so much about that it has become entrenched in his memory. He was with his aunt, from his grandfather's side of the family, when suddenly a vehicle pulled up and stopped. A man got out, took him into his arms, and held him lovingly. The man was his father.

Within the "Fairy Tale about the Hare, Fox, and

Rooster" there is a text by Andrzej Czarnecki, written with the help of Stanisław Bęć, but for his son Jasiek. It describes how the idea of publishing the fairy tales came to be, and who they are meant for, who put them together, and he asks his son to remember all those who worked on the project in his prayers.

From Stanisław Bęć's testimony we know that there are a few more texts, for example, "About Everything that Lives," "The Wedding in Osy Wielkie," "The Giant-Egoist," and "The Fern Flower." Only the first is to be published as a book, the others are hand written on small sheets of paper.

"About Everything that Lives" is a collection of poems about insects, birds, and animals that can be found outdoors as well as those in yard near the home. The poems are about their habits, behavior, and coexistence with people. The basis of this was a Czech fairy tale found in the "Canada" warehouses, and using this Stanisław Bęć wrote his own poems. At the same time, Piotr Kopańczuk and Zbigniew Kowalczyk copied almost all the photos from this Czech book. The only original composition is the panorama of the sea by Piotr Kopańczuk, that includes the poem "To my Son" in the background. A short dedication: "For Boba's 5th birthday. Father" dated 7 July 1944 and the poem "To my Son" and "Prayer" were for Stanisław Bęć's son Andrzej, showing the strong emotions between father and son, and the father's longing.

"The Wedding in Osy Wielkie" tells the story of the marriage and wedding celebration of a wasp and a worker bee, about their guests—insects from fields, forests, and farmland—and how they celebrated. At the end of the text there is



Photo: Collections Department, ABSM

INTERVIEW WITH ANDRZEJ B. CZULDA, DIRECTOR AND SCREEN WRITER OF THE FILM "FAIRY TALES FROM THE LAND OF OVENS"



Stanisław Bęć and Andrzej B. Czulda

□ Do you remember the fairy tales from your childhood? My father brought the book for my older brother personally when he returned from the camps, which he survived six. From time to time they would sit together and read. I remember only bits and pieces, because when my father died, I was seven years old. When I look back, I remember the fairy tale was always on shelf at home—treated like a relic. It was not lent to anyone, because if it would have gone missing, you would not have been able to open it. Unfortunately, I never had the opportunity to speak to my father on the subject since I was so young.

□ You are a documentary film director, but this is your first film dealing with Auschwitz. When did you get the idea to make the film? As a filmmaker, I never had the idea to make a film about the fairy tales from Auschwitz; however, the topic was always at arms length on my bookshelf. It was only by accident that I took up the subject. In 1998, I was talking about the fairy tales my father brought with my friend at work, an editor at the studio. When I brought them, they moved her deeply. She first suggested that I take up the subject in a film. I started to consider making a film and then for the first time I came to the Museum with my brother. It was a traumatic experience for the two of us,

because we wondered if our father had walked here, if he had fallen, if he was beaten here... Later I started to look for sponsors. For ten years we could not convince Polish Television to make the film. Half of the needed budget was given to us by the Polish Film Institute, which looked upon the screen play very positively. And just as we thought the project would fall through, Discovery Historia TVN took interest in the film at the very last moment. The State

Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau made it clear that it would fully support the production in kind. And that is how the film's production finally moved forward.

□ What was the most difficult thing during the production? I had one problem as director: I knew that the main aspect of the film has to be based on emotions, which will be its greatest strength, but at the same time I was very much afraid that later I will be accused of making a tribute to my father. I asked my crew, who I had worked with for 25 years, to tell me when I was crossing the line of objectivity. I was, for better or worse, tied to the topic emotionally and they looked after me. They helped me quite a bit. I think that I was successful because I saw people walking out after screenings very moved, often to the point of tears. This film had a great effect on the emotional sphere of the viewers. With this film, we called the "fairy tales out of the saddest place on earth" from oblivion. In 1998, when I was at the Museum for the first time, I met Jadwiga Kulasza from the Museum Archive, who had been working with the fairy tales published in the camp for some time. She wrote a wonderful article about them in the "Zeszyty Oświęcimskie", for which I am very thankful. Those two things coincided in time and more was getting out about the topic.

□ In the film there are two fragments when parts of the fairy tales are read, while in the background there are scenes of the prisoners' life created by former prisoners. Where did you get this idea?

These fairy tales have another meaning: these are stories for children, but they can be read as if they are describing life in the camp. And in the film, the camp life has to be described. I knew the drawings by Kościelniak and I decided that these would be the most appropriate and credible images of camp life painted by a prisoner himself. However, I decided to mainly use the pictures by Władysław Siwek.

□ I have seen the film several times and every time I watch it I have the same feeling that this is a film, above all, about the great love of a father for his child, and the fairy tales are only the back drop... We got away from the fairy tales in the film. We told their history, but the main topic was in fact the love of a father for his child. It had to be explained how they were created in secret. The director has to pull out of the film a bit more: that above all, this is a film about the great love for children, who prisoners often did not know, because they were born after they had been arrested. Often I have wondered if I would have risked my life, or if I would have worried, on the other hand, more about bread. Jadwiga Kulasza told me that as they drew these books they "exited the camp" in their thoughts. Nobody could have taken this away from them. Working in the *Bauleitung*, they had to be clean, in the rooms it had to be warm and the work was lighter. This helped my father survive. ■

Interview by
Agnieszka Juskowiak-Sawicka



Andrzej B. Czulda recipient of the tales Zbigniew Czulda



Photo: Collections Department, ABSM



Photo: Collections Department, ABSM

an annotation "Written for Boba, May 44 O". Bęć's next story, entitled "The Giant-Egoist" is based on Oscar Wilde's "The Selfish Giant," but unlike the original it is in the form of a poem. It tells the story of

children playing in a beautiful garden belonging to the Giant while he is away. By throwing out the children, all the life in the garden dies, but returns when the children once again fill it with their racket.

The last text mentioned, entitled "The Fern Flower" was not preserved, the only thing that is known is that S. Bęć wrote it in October 1944 and left it in one of the Zentralbauleitung barracks. The fairy tales were to be a special memento for his children, but to get to them, help was needed from outside the wires. Even though they were risking their lives, there were many who took it upon themselves to save many important documents and various works of art created by prisoners, including the fairy tales. Prisoners took the finished copies secretly from the offices to the different building sites and they were given to trusted civilian workers, who were asked to send them to a particular address.

All known copies of the fairy tales, with the exception of one, made it to the children

during the War. Eugeniusz Nosal gave the fairy tales to two girls whose mothers took an active role in helping prisoners. The "Fairy Tale about the Hare, Fox, and Rooster" was presented to five-year-old Alojza Kotulek, who along with her mother Elżbieta and Wanda Kondziolek, was active as a link between prisoners and the civilian population by receiving or delivering letters, secret messages and providing food as well as medicine. Similar help was given to prisoners by Lewińska (first name unknown), who as a symbol of gratitude, received two fairy tales for her daughter Małgosia, one about the black chick and the other about the hare, fox, and rooster.

According to E. Nosal, already in August of 1943 the "Fairy Tale about the Hare, Fox, and Rooster" made its way to little Jasiak, son of prisoners Andrzej Czarnecki. Getting it to Kraków was done by Wanda Kondziolek, who for about three years did such work. The copies that Józef Drożdż received were meant for his nephew Tadeusz Sitko. The fairy tales were delivered to the house of his sister Maria, who lived in Grodziec, by Józef Łyszczarz of Myslowice, who worked at Auschwitz as a telephone repairman and used this opportunity to bring food parcels prepared in Maria Sitko's home to the camp.

Artur Krzetuski worked along with the leader of the civilian well-digging commando in the camp, Józef Zurek. He used this contact to send his daughter "Fairy Tale about the Hare, Fox, and Rooster." Stanisław Bęć also took advantage of civilian contacts to get the publications out of the camp. Even though he does not remember their names, he is amazed at their incredible courage, because they indeed "risked everything, just to meet a demand of a *häftling* only because it could be his last request."

An unknown SS officer delivered the story of the hare, fox, and rooster to the home of Felician Świerczyna.

The story drawn by Henryk Czulda took an extraordinary route. According to a secret message he sent his wife 28 September 1944, it turns out that he tried to send the "Fairy Tale about the Hare, Fox, and Rooster" officially out of the camp as registered mail. When this proved impossible H. Czulda decided, despite everything, to rescue the fairy tale for his son. And even though in a secret message from 20-21 October 1944 he doubted "if I will be able to save the fairy tale for

Zbyszek!", however, when he was transported out of Auschwitz (29 October 1944) he smuggled the fairy tale together with photographs he received from home. And this is how it was through the next five concentration camps to which he was sent. He did not even consider giving up a piece of bread, which was already a starvation ration. Henryk Czulda, despite the many difficult moments and considerable exhaustion, was liberated by U.S. Army 30 April 1945 and returned to the Poland in August of the same year. Due to the lack of information, it is not possible to trace the path of the fairy tale about two chicks to the hands of the son of Auschwitz prisoner Jan Kula. From information provided by his wife we know that he got it out of the camp. However, J. Kula died shortly after the war leaving the question of how a fairy tale with the date 1 September 1944 was attained by a prisoner who was released from the camp 28 January 1942.

A similar fate is shared by two other fairy tales, which have just recently seen the light of day. In 1999, information came forward about a previously unknown story entitled "The Learned Cat," which was given to Czesław Czekajski by his uncle in 1943 as a New Year's gift. This fairy tale contains twelve poems—out of eighteen—and drawings from the collection of poems "About Everything that Lives." What differentiates it from this collection is the title and first seven pages, from which emerges a story of a respectable family of hares. Additionally, the story's connection to Auschwitz is confirmed by the poem "Prayer" and the words remembered from it by Czesław: "Won't you forget, oh Father, to bring dad back from the distant road?"

However, in 2002 a second fairy tale became known, but this time the title was "The Adventures of the Black Chick and his Brother." The book most likely was brought to Zakopane in mid-1944 and was received by Barbara Tondos from her father Władysław, a prisoner of Auschwitz. He was a doctor and worked in the camp hospital. It is assumed that the book was given by one of the prisoners that took part in their creation as a good will gesture for medical care in the camp hospital.

In the view of author and translator Stanisław Bęć, the publishing of fairy tales in the camp cannot be looked at as literary events, because the storyline is not important, but the content full of personal feelings, deeply hidden desires, longings and experiences of prisoners before their arrest. Currently, because of where and when they were created they are more documents than works of art or literature. However, this aspect cannot be stripped from them, since they delight all those who see them.

The initiatives taken by prisoners can be interpreted as of form of the resistance movement, and as Italian psychiatrist and psychologist Andrea Devoto said, "Resistance could have been anything, because nothing was allowed. Resistance was all work that showed that something remained of the prisoner's past personality and individuality." Publishing fairy tales at the Auschwitz Camp also shows that many prisoners did not surrender to the camp system that was created to degrade and break humans, while in such a beautiful way expressed the fact that their life in the camp was limited to, as was stated by former prisoner Walentyna Nikodem, "a race for a bit of water and food." ■

Jadwiga Kulasza



Photo: Collections Department, ABSM



Photo: Collections Department, ABSM



MODERN SCHOOLING AND AUSCHWITZ

Is Auschwitz only a memorial of the tragic history of the Holocaust and genocide? Can we learn more from it than dates, numbers, and names? Does Auschwitz only teach about the history of the victims and perpetrators, or does it also say something about people today? Contemplating these and similar questions are participants of a seminar for teachers from the program "Why do we need tolerance?" that is organized by the Jewish Center in Oświęcim in cooperation with the Roma Association in Poland.



Photo: JC



Photo: JC

The first seminar took place on 13 and 14 February, under the care of Professor Barbara Weigl from the School of Social Psychology in Warsaw. On Saturday, teachers from Oświęcim district schools, together with a representative of the local district, visited the Auschwitz Museum, guided by Katarzyna Nowak. This was a study visit and focused on the history of certain groups of prisoners in the camp in the context of

their social situation: prejudice and discrimination, whose consequences were repressions, and then being held in the concentration camp.

Later during the seminar participants were introduced to the results of Professor Barbara Weigl's pioneering research on the subject of national stereotypes among children and young people in Polish schools and the possibilities of modifying them during

their education. Inspiring a heated debate about the reasons for discrimination and its effects was the showing of the film "Blue Eyes," which was a documentary of the most famous anti-discrimination experiments conducted for the first time in the United States.

The second day of the seminar started with a tour of the Jewish Center, which included the exhibits "Jews in Oświęcim" and "New Life," as well as the Chevra Lom-

dei Mishnayot Synagogue. After the visit there was a presentation dedicated to the history and current Roma minority in Poland. Next, participants took part in learning new practical activities, which allow for reflection on the topic of identity, group relations, social exclusion and its destructive consequences. All presented activities can be used in the classroom as practical and safe tools to show, through experience,

inspiring students to consider the meaning of their own behavior.

We plan to stay in contact with graduates of our seminar, supporting them in connecting historical knowledge about Auschwitz with awareness of modern consequences of prejudice and discrimination. We look forward to meeting the participants of the next seminar in March. ■

Maciek Zabierowski



Photo: JC



Photo: JC



"ALL WANT TO BE VICTIMS"

AN INTERVIEW WITH NORBERT RECK

Norbert Reck was one of the guests at the New Year days of retreat at the Center for Dialogue and Prayer in Oświęcim, which took place for the sixth time 28 December 2009–1 January 2010. This year's meeting was entitled "The End of Silence."



Photo: CDP

NORBERT RECK

Norbert Reck, born in 1961, Doctor of theology, editor responsible for the international German-language theological periodical *Concilium*; member of the Research Council of the periodical *Theology of History*. His doctoral thesis concerned the meaning of witnesses of concentration camps for theology (1998). Author of radio shows and books, as well as reports on religious education. He lectures in philosophy and theology in a Catholic School in Munich, the University of Saarland in Saarbrücken, and at the Free University of Berlin. E-mail: norbert.reck@mnnet-mail.de

This year, 70 years after the outbreak of the Second World War, we wanted to focus on the problem of silence, to consider how difficult it is to name and describe traumatic experiences as well as their consequences. Silence is often a way of forgetting, suppressing the experiences, with which we cannot deal. But this path does not lead to peace. Georg Sterzinsky, the Metropolitan of Berlin, in an interview for KAI on the 70th anniversary of the outbreak of the Second World War said: "We should also know that time itself does not cure the wrongs, but helps heal wounds, but we can also pass negative emotions to future generations. Truth is tightly intertwined with forgiveness, which always forms deep, inner bond of community, greater than just forgetting." Taking part in the days of retreat was a Polish-German-Ukrainian group.

From the theological point of view is there a need for the clear distinction between the victim and perpetrator, or can it be said that in some sense we are all victims?

Norbert Reck: Concerning the first point, if we need a sharp distinction between the victims and perpetrators, I cannot answer this question. Concerning the second question, from a theological point we should avoid seeing every one of us as victims. In the Gospel there is fragment, specifically in the Gospel of Mark during the arrest of Jesus, where He states bluntly that he gave Himself up to the Romans on His own free will. In the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed briefly that this chalice could be dismissed, but it is only

a short prayer, and He certainly did not want to avoid this situation, did not want to run from it. He goes on his way. Jesus could have theoretically escaped, but he did not do this. For me, this means that Jesus does not become a victim. He is actively continuing along his path, which He thinks He should walk along. He does not become a victim; He makes a decision that He will go to the cross. He is the Son of God, who is doing this on His own free will. I think that is the key for anyone who wants to find in the Gospel that in every situation there is the possibility of action and not remaining idle and passive. Even if the road leads to death, we can walk this path in such a way that we make it our own road.

The concept of sacrifice is defined here as something negative?

Yes, as an experience that destroys human subjectivity and freedom. And, of course, these situations exist, but I read the Gospel in such a way as to search for possibilities so that I could work actively in a positive way.

Is it not true that from the religious perspective the victim is looked upon positively? In Judaism for Jews there are two important mountains, Moriah and Sinai, however, the more important is Moriah where Abraham agreed to sacrifice his son, in other words, give up what is most important to him in his life. According to one Orthodox Rabbi from Israel, it is important what we do for God and not what God does for us. On Moriah, a person was ready to give up everything for God. In Christianity, the Eucharist is the commemoration of Jesus's sacrifice, the peak of Christian maturity. Can we speak about the fruits

of making a sacrifice?

In many languages there are two words that describe a sacrifice; in French they are *victime* and *sacrifice*. Up to now, I have been speaking about *victime*. While, perhaps, the situation of *victime* is the experience that destroys the person and their soul, but in Jesus's situation it was just the opposite of this situation—I give my own life as a *sacrifice* for all and actively do so for everyone. In this way, which was looked upon as *victime* He becomes someone who actively gives his life for others. In this way, Jesus gave up his own life as a *sacrifice*, so that no one would ever have to be a *victime*. God needs a YES from us; He does not play us like marionettes. He wants our active involvement. God does not need *victime*, but needs us, those who want to give *sacrifice*. In this way I also read the history of Abraham, who believed that he had to give up his only son. God told Abraham to sacrifice his only son, but this may have been Abraham's interpretation. It is certain, though that God said STOP, no more human victims. And one more thing—I believe that we can read Abraham's history as a guide for understanding and better interpreting the history of Jesus.

So in understanding *victime* and *sacrifice*, *victime* has a negative connotation, *sacrifice* requires

free will. To move from *victime* and become *sacrifice* free will is necessary.

Yes, absolutely, it is about one's own, voluntary human response to God's will.

In that case, what were the victims of Auschwitz?

When we hear the testimony of people who were in Auschwitz, we have contact with the testimony of those who were saved, as well as with those who died and, in some way, were able to preserve their testimony in jars that were later found. We can say that in fact there are two types of testimony. There is the testimony of those who were objects to the end, and those who prayed Our Father or Sh'ma Yisrael, and in this way stayed active until the end. Of course, the history of Maximilian Kolbe is known; he was active and became a *sacrifice*. There are also testimonies of those who were murdered feeling utter despair, those who did not understand what was happening to them; children, who did not know why they were being treated in such a way; and those who lost their minds.

Does this also include those who cursed God because they were experiencing such horrifying things?

I dare not say that. Protesting God is also an active response, which commends respect of those doing so.

It is interesting that even those who cursed God, had not denied Him completely—they still assumed His existence. An example of this is Elie Wiesel, who completely rejected God after what

BOOKS BY NORBERT RECK:

1. "Mit Blick Auf die Täter. Fragen an die deutsche Theologie nach 1945"
2. "Abenteuer Gott – Den christlichen Glauben neu denken"
3. "Erinnern. Erkundungen zu einer theologischen Basis-kategorie"
4. "Von Gott reden im Land der Täter. Theologische Stimmen der dritten Generation seit der Shoah"
5. "Im Angesicht der Zeugen. Eine Theologie nach Auschwitz"





he had lived though in the camp, while at the same time rejecting God, said that he would remember the first night in the camp even if he lived as long as God himself...

In this case, the person is not rejecting God, but staying in dialogue with God. I do not want to create the impression that I am differentiating between good and bad prisoners. Those who died screaming, losing their minds are not worse, just as those who died praying are not the better. This is very important. I just wanted to say that the meaning of religion lies in the fact that, in

difficult situations it allows us to take specific action. It is not possible for everyone, but this does not mean that others have taken the immoral, wrong path. Maybe it is grace that someone can pray to the very end.

□ **Did God need the victims of Auschwitz so that He can teach us something?**

I do not believe in that. I do not believe that God wanted victims. I do not think that God wanted Auschwitz. If we are to say that God wanted to show us something, than in this situation it is not compatible with my Christian faith. God did not want

Auschwitz. It was people that wanted Auschwitz. As a German theologian, it is important for me to clearly say that those were Germans, who organized, planned, and created Auschwitz and God did not look on neutrally. God did not want that.

□ **And is it not so that, when we speak only of people at Auschwitz, that we disparage Auschwitz a bit? How does Auschwitz fit into God's plan? One Pope asked, where was humankind, another asked, where was God?**

For me the question is: where were Chris-

tians? If we ask, where was God, then we are all victims. The question about humankind is one that helps us. When you said a moment ago that there is a general tendency today that we all want to be victims, I wanted to point out the trend of famous 1930s' German Catholic theologians, who believed and said that God plainly defines human history. And the will of God is within history and we, as people, have the duty to do what God wants of us. Theologian Michael Schmaus took this so far, that he said that Adolf Hitler was God's will. Not to teach people something,

but Hitler was to lead people down the path to become real people. If it is to be believed that God's will controls history and that people can only obey, then all those passive participants are in fact only victims of history. And that's what many Germans said after the War, we could not do anything, it happened, we are innocent, we are victims. That is why it is important for me to emphasize that Christianity wants to support the active engagement of humankind. ■

*Interview by
Marta Titańiec
Interpreter:
Joachim von Wedel*

65 YEARS AFTER AUSCHWITZ



The 65th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau was a moment for 30 young Europeans to meet (coming from countries such as: Poland, Germany, Lithuania, Bielarus, Ukraine, Russia, and the Czech Republic) with 12 people who were not only survivors of Auschwitz, but also other concentration camps as well as Ghettos scattered across Europe.

The meeting was organized as part of the project "65 Years After Auschwitz" by the German organization Maximilian Kolbe Werk, which works in helping former prisoners who live in Central-Eastern Europe. Young people from the State Higher Vocational School in Oświęcim also took part in this meeting.

This project took place from 25 to 29 of January. During the five days, the Missionaries of the Immaculate Virgin Mary of Father Maximilian Kolbe in Harmęże hosted the young people as well as the former prisoners. There, existed the possibility for meetings in small groups with the former prisoners—to hear the voice of a generation that survived the nightmare of war. The inter-generational meetings were the most important part of this project and served as an inspiration for the young people for further conversations as well as during the workshop meetings.

In addition to conversations about history, there was much time allotted for speaking about the future. The young people, learning from their elders, discussed during the workshops, among others, democratic systems in their own countries, the problems of minorities, and about exceptions. The effect of the workshop meetings was the *Appeal of Young Europeans*, which is assumed to be present, discussed and developed at various community forums, not only by the project participants, but all concerned with these issues. ■

Wiktor Boberek



APPEAL OF YOUNG EUROPEANS

We, 30 young adults from eight European countries, invited by Maximilian Kolbe Werk met in Oświęcim from 25 to 29 January 2010 for the occasion of the 65th anniversary of the liberation of the concentration camp Auschwitz-Birkenau with former prisoners of concentration camps and Ghettos. We met to hear their testimony about the horrifying events caused by the Nazi regime and during personal conversations with them, learn from their experiences.

For the witnesses of history it is still a great deal of effort, even after the passing of 65 years, to talk about their difficult experiences and events in concentration camps and Ghettos, about repression and the terror it involved. Lyudmila Voloshina was able to only recount with difficulty and tears in her eyes that her parents were shot dead by the Germans in the Ukraine.

"It is better to attentively listen to testimony once, than to read it ten times," wisely stated Josyf Bursuk, a witness of Jewish origin from the Ukraine. We are the last generation, that still has the opportunity to have personal contact and speak with witnesses of history. However long it is possible, we want to continue and deepen our contact with witnesses of history. We must learn history, so that we can today see where people are isolated because of their origins, language, or appearance.

We put the question to ourselves: What attitude, as young people, do we have to take towards the past? How can we prevent the repetition of the tragic events caused by the Nazi regime?

The enemy of reason is ideology. We too are responsible for making sure that injustice, exclusion, and violence has no place in our society. We speak different languages, however, this does not stand in our way to, using our own ideas, actively work for peace and reconciliation. We do not only want to discuss, but also reach out beyond national borders, work towards the goal that Auschwitz will never and anywhere be repeated.

We, young people from Poland, Germany, Austria, the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Belarus, Russia, and the Ukraine, appeal to work for humankind. "Being different" is enrichment and not a reason for exclusion. We want to work against anti-Semitism, racism, Fascism, and discrimination. We want to work toward expanding solidarity among ourselves, the active dialogue between faiths and religions, and working in building among ourselves better understanding. In the future we will do everything that this meeting will not be considered useless!





Born March 19, 1921 in Oświęcim, the only daughter of Wincenty and Józefa, nee Koszała. Her parents were fairly well off and took pains to provide her with the best possible education. She attended public school in a four-year *gimnazjum* in her hometown. In June 1939, she passed her *matura* (final school examination, conferring the right to enroll in university) at the Natural Sciences Lyceum in Biała Krakowska. She intended to

PEOPLE OF GOOD WILL

WINCENCJA STOLARSKA
(1921-1995, MARRIED NAME: NIKIEL)

study medicine, but the outbreak of the war ruined her plans.

She joined the scouts at a very young age, and the scouting movement provided her with a growing, well-grounded sense of patriotism and a readiness to help those in need. This was reflected in the first days of the occupation, when she and her fellow girl scouts fed prisoners of war passing through Oświęcim. Later, she cared for the graves of Polish soldiers killed fighting in nearby Rajsko during the first days of the war.

She was deeply committed to alleviating the distress of the Auschwitz prisoners who began appearing outside the camp to perform various kinds of labor in mid-1940. Among them were the

surveyors who took measurements of the landscape around the camp. It was with them that she first established illegal contact; over time, she formed similar contacts with other prisoner labor details. She fed them and supplied them with medicine, as well as serving as an intermediary in the secret correspondence between the camp and the prisoners' families. On many occasions, she personally delivered secret messages from prisoners to the indicated addresses. In the reverse direction, she carried various items, photographs, and articles of clothing to prisoners from their families. She was mostly active in the Babice area, not far from Oświęcim. She covered such distances that she often went by bicycle. On one of her clandestine aid missions, she met a prisoner named Tymo-

teusz Grabowski, from the surveyors' detail, and they fell in love. Unfortunately, Grabowski died in March 1942 in one of the underground cells of Block no. 11, the "Death Block." This came as a great blow to Wincencja Stolarska.

In February 1942, she began working for the German AEG-Bauleitung Company, at the site in Dwory, outside Oświęcim, where the IG-Farbenindustrie chemical complex was under construction. She took the prisoners laboring at the IG-Farbenindustrie site under her protection, giving them material aid of various forms. Nor did she stop helping the prisoners laboring in the Babice area, although her new job meant that she could only do so sporadically; she could only go there after work or on her days off. Assisted on occasion by her cousin Stanisława Kostecka of Oświęcim and by her father, she continued to help the prisoners until the end of 1944.

After liberation, she married

Władysław Nikiel on April 10, 1945. Later, she gave birth to twin daughters. Raising the children and looking after the home prevented her from attending medical school, as she had dreamed of doing before the war. Nevertheless, she continued her education by attending evening courses. After earning qualifications as a builder, she took a position as an inspector with the Katowice *Województwo* People's Council, supervising and auditing construction projects throughout the province. She balanced her professional and domestic obligations with volunteer work, and was very active in the Union of Fighters for Freedom and Democracy (ZBoWiD). She was frequently invited to address groups of young people and talk to them about her work with the "Auschwitz girl scouts." She maintained close contacts with many of the former prisoners she had helped during their time in the camp. She died in Bytom on October 21, 1995. ■

VESTIGES OF HISTORY FROM THE COLLECTIONS OF THE AUSCHWITZ MUSEUM

There were many symbols in Auschwitz that were forbidden. One of these was the symbol of the white eagle. However, even though the consequences could be harsh, the symbol appeared on signets, gorgets, drawings, and woodcarvings created illegally by prisoners. In the camp the Eagle was the representation of a certain attitude or values. It was a symbol of patriotism, determination of prisoners, as well as courage—all the more, that just having such an object could lead to punishment.

The medallion shown on the photograph was created from a Polish five-złoty coin. It is covered with black enamel and its edge is decoratively engraved. It was created in the camp's metal smith shop, where more such coins were transformed

in this way.

This medallion was created in 1942 by Jan Liwacz, a master metal worker, one of the makers of the gate that led into Auschwitz "Arbeit Macht Frei." It was given to a fellow camp prisoner, Nikodem Pieszczocho, as

thanks for help provided. Nikodem's family sent him German Marks to the camp, but since he worked in the camp's kitchen, he did not need them. So, he handed them out to more needy friends from his family village Bukowsko, near Sanok,

from which Jan Liwacz also originated. "The medallion ... traveled with me a long way to freedom," Nikodem Pieszczocho said following the War.

If object did in fact have mystical powers to bring good fortune, then this little medallion would definitely fit this category. Nikodem Pieszczocho was moved from Auschwitz to the camp Neuengamme, after its evacuation, he was one of the few to survive the sinking of the ship "Cap Arcona."

In 1980, Nikodem Pieszczocho donated the medallion and other mementos to the Museum. He wrote: "My personal wish is that these items are properly conserved and serve the Museum in preserving the memory of the martyrdom



Medallion made by Jan Liwacz

and the struggle of our generation with violence and barbarism of Fascism." ■

Agnieszka Sieradzka
Collections Department
ABSM

FROM GANOBIS'S CABINET

AN EXTRAORDINARY BOOK

The History of the Duchies of Oświęcim and Zator is a book published in 1876. Jan Nepomucen Gątkowski, the director of the Main Lwów Exemplary Peasant's School, was the author. Unfortunately, it is not known how many were published, but most certainly it was a rare book.

It contains very interesting drawings and writings including panorama of the city of Oświęcim, as well as the Municipal coat of arms. The language that it was written in also draws attention. Today, we do not sue such words. There is a sample: "In the year 1598, living in the city of Oświęcim the following burgers and own-

ers real estate of the city owned."

The book was divided into sections: The first of which was "The oldest of settlers on this land, their manners and disposition, X – 965." I found this publication at an antiques market. Looking through the book, I found illustrations that reminded me of Oświęcim. What it

has been through in the past is unknown. It is also unknown how it survived so many years. I wondered how many people had read it, but one thing is clear for a 143-year-old, it is in good shape.

My collection contains several interesting books, which froze our town in time. There are not many



Book written by Jan Nepomucen Gątkowski

historical books written on the subject of our town, however, many were written before 1939. During the German occupation, many were destroyed. I do not

know how many such lost treasures I will be able to find, but I want to get as many as possible. ■

Mirosław Ganobis

„What do we need tolerance for?” poster.



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